

Thank you for your interest in the “*Folks Like Us*” Bible studies by Fran Sciacca. Whether you’re using them for your own spiritual growth and journey, or as a resource for your small group, Sunday school, or homeschool program, you’ll soon discover why these studies originally sold over 600,000 copies in their print editions. The recent decision by the publisher to discontinue print editions and to return the publishing rights back to Fran has given him the freedom to make the nearly 70 individual character studies available to you...at no cost.

### **Before you make copies and use the studies...**

- **[COPYRIGHT]** – Each of the Bible studies that are a part of *Folks Like Us* is copyrighted. You have permission to make as many copies as you like/need for yourself and/or whatever ministry environment you intend to use them. You do *not* have permission to sell these studies. You may, however, request a small fee to cover the cost of copying, if necessary.
- **[PRINTING]** – The security setting for each PDF allows you to print the study, but not to edit it. When you print these studies, you may want to use the “Print Page Range” feature of your software, and start the printing with Page 3, and you won’t have to print the color cover or this Introduction page. *If you plan to have them printed professionally, you may want to include the cover.*
- **[DONATIONS]** – Although there is no charge for the studies, feel free to make a non-deductible donation to help offset the annual cost of web-hosting, etc. at: [paypal.me/handsofthur](https://www.paypal.me/handsofthur)
- **[QUESTIONS/COMMENTS]** – Email them to: [information@fransciacca.com](mailto:information@fransciacca.com)

### **Other great resources on fransciacca.com**

Now that you’ve begun to explore the Bible study resources developed by Fran Sciacca, you will almost certainly benefit from the other things that he has made available:

- **“*The Road to Shalom*” podcast** – thought-provoking and thoroughly biblical, Fran explores what the Bible calls “shalom,”—the way things are *supposed* to be in God’s Kingdom, why they’re not, and how to restore them. All three seasons are available on the website.
- ***Biblical literacy courses*** – Three, 13-week Bible courses covering the entire Bible. Includes individual course books, audio, and optional animated slide supplements. Course books and animated slide supplements may be purchased on the web store.
- **“*What’s Wrong With the World?*”** – A 14-part video series exploring the questions, “*What is the gospel, and does it really matter?*” and “*What is a disciple, and what does one look like?*” Each episode includes a small group handout as well as supplemental leader’s notes. You may take the series for a “test drive” and purchase the series.
- **“*Knot or Noose? - Recovering the Mystery of Marriage*”** – A 9-part video series for singles, engaged, or married couples exploring marriage from a radical perspective. Instead of trying to figure out how to get God into marriage, this series will guide you into how to place marriage into the center of the larger redemptive plan of God. This conference has been presented live throughout the U.S. in a multitude of different settings. Each episode includes everything needed for a small group. You may take the series for a “test drive” and order the series.



# FOLKS Like Us

PETER & PAUL

“Other Believers - Iron Sharpening Iron”

Timeless truths from our ancient past,  
for a journey with God in the modern era.

**Fran Sciacca**

## “*Folks Like Us*” — an introduction

Over the years I’ve written and published a number of Bible studies that collectively have sold well over a half-million copies. They were forged, most of them, in the furnaces of pain, doubt, and loneliness. Maybe that’s why they were well-used, they touched people where they hurt most.

Recently, my publisher decided that they no longer wanted to handle the books that contained these 60 or so individual studies. So, I’ve decided to make them available to any who might benefit from them. At no cost.

I have always believed that because God thought it best to become human in the Incarnation, that perhaps “incarnational truth” was His preferred method of revealing Himself and His purposes to us. I suppose that’s where the basic genre of these studies originated. I wanted to provide believers with Bible studies rooted in our ancestral past. The lives of men and women, who it turns out, are “folks just like us” in so many ways.

So, please take your time and work slowly through as many of these studies as you care to do... there’s a lot of them! And may God use the combination of the struggles and insights of your *ancient* brothers and sisters, combined with those of mine, your modern brother, to help you in your spiritual journey. That is the goal of this project.

Warmly in The Lamb,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fran Sciacca". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fran Sciacca  
Birmingham, AL

# PETER & PAUL

## “Other Believers - Iron Sharpening Iron”

**A**BIDING PRINCIPLE – In His work to make us more like His Son, God's most able agents might be an unsuspecting group: Spirit-led believers and friends who know the Scriptures and who are willing to speak it truthfully...even if it hurts.

*"One loving heart sets another on fire."* —Augustine

Sometimes we naively ascribe super-spirituality to biblical characters like Joshua, Elijah, and the apostle Paul. We forget that our record of their lives in Scripture must be viewed as believers "on the way"—just like we are. God's goal for *all* of His children has never changed; He desires to point people to Himself by conforming us to the likeness of His Son.

Scripture provides great hope as we read about people like ourselves who grew in grace as they cooperated with God's transforming work in their lives. One such story involves the two men who are frequently credited with the spread of Christianity in the first century, Peter and Paul. In a rare anecdotal section in Paul's letter to the Galatians, we find an incident in which he *publicly* rebukes Peter! In an effort to correct both Peter's behavior *and* theology, Paul confronts him about the impact his sin had on other leaders and believers. In the twenty-first century, we cringe imagining another Christian taking this type of liberty concerning *our* spiritual lives (unless the person is a therapist we're paying to counsel us!). Unfortunately in our highly privatized culture, we're cutting ourselves off from the very assistance we need to mature as believers. And *we* may be depriving fellow believers of the opportunity to grow when *we* refuse to assume a measure of responsibility for their progress in the faith.

**KEY SCRIPTURE:** Galatians 1:10-2:21

---

### STUDY QUESTIONS...

1. In Galatians 2:1-14, Paul gives an abbreviated history of his encounters with Peter and the other rulers in the church at Jerusalem. What was the conclusion of the early church leaders concerning obedience to the Old Testament ceremonial laws by converts to Christianity (see especially verses 1-3,9-10)?
2. In your own words, piece together, what happened in Antioch, according to Paul's account in 2:11-14. (Note that in verse 12, "James" refers to the leaders in Jerusalem. The "circumcision group" was a group that was insisting that to be considered "authentic" Christians, non-Jewish converts to Jesus needed to follow many Jewish customs.)

3. Paul's rebuke of Peter involves both his theology (what he believed) *and* his conduct (how he lived it out). Which of the two was Paul most concerned about and why? Think carefully!
4. Why do you think Paul *publicly* confronted Peter rather than privately, as Jesus commanded in Matthew 18:15?
5. Paul's correction of Peter was much more than a conflict between two people. Later in this letter he gives specific instructions for all believers regarding the responsibility we have toward one another. Read Galatians 6:1-2. What is Paul's point? (Note that the word "caught" here implies a surprise attack, and the word for "sin" is more of a "slip-up" than a willful choice.)

How do you see Paul applying this principle in his confrontation with Peter?

6. Helping other believers deal with sin in their lives, though difficult, is clearly commanded in God's Word. Hebrews 3:12-13 is a passage that provides excellent insight and teaching on this subject. Carefully read it several times and answer the following questions.
  - a. In your own words, clarify the warning in verse 12.
  - b. Do you think the condition described in verse 12 is the result of a single decision or a process? Explain your answer.
  - c. There's a sense of urgency in verse 13 because our earthly life can be cut short. The process of how anyone arrives at the place of unbelief and sin is plain. Isolate the following thoughts from verse 13.
    - (1) What sin does –
    - (2) How sin accomplishes this –
    - (3) What can prevent this –

- (4) Explain how sin's "deceitfulness" makes it necessary for encouragement and help to come from *another* believer rather than from yourself?
7. The word translated "encourage" in Hebrews 3:13 is from the same word family translated "Comforter" in John 14 and 15, referring to the Holy Spirit. However, the words "comfort" and "encourage" had totally different meanings when they were translated in the fourteenth century. At that time, they referred to putting strength or courage into someone, *not* consoling or sympathizing as they mean today. One scholar has said that the words refer to a person who *"makes us able to stand up to the opposing forces, to cope with life and to conquer life ... one who puts courage into the faint-hearted, one who nerves the feeble arm for fight, one who makes a very ordinary man cope gallantly with a perilous and a dangerous situation."* Look at Hebrews 3:13-14 and your answer to question 6 on page 5. With your new understanding of what these words mean, what do you think it would look like to "encourage" someone, as a strategy to thwart sin's effect in their lives?
8. How important was the transformation of believers in Paul's theology and ministry (see Colossians 1:28-29; 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12; and Ephesians 4:11-15)?
9. Summarize what connection you see between our relationships with one another, and God's goal for each of us to resemble Jesus more and more.
10. The following Scriptures deal with how we cooperate with God in the spiritual progress of fellow believers. Summarize what you discover regarding the privilege *and* responsibility given to each of us by God:
- Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 –
  - Ezekiel 33:7-9 –
  - Matthew 18:15-17 –
  - Ephesians 4:29 –

e. Colossians 3: 16 –

f. 1 Thessalonians 5:14 –

g. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 –

h. 2 Timothy 4:2 –

## LOOKING BACK...

---

**I**n our age of privatized faith, personal branding, and an absence of accountability, the Bible paints a portrait of a believer that is quite the opposite. He desires that we actively, regularly, and faithfully be involved in the spiritual progress of our brothers and sisters in Christ. This means inviting one another see the potential danger of sin infecting our lives, because we humbly acknowledge that we can be deceived by it. We're also called to put strength and courage into one another through personal involvement, loyal commitment, and frequent sharing of truth from Scripture. We're meant to be God's "partners" in His work of grace in the lives of His *other* children. After all, we're in the same family! And, if we're faithful to this assignment, the work of making each other more like Jesus not only occurs; it also greatly advances the kingdom of God in our world.

## APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- Self Assessment:** Before you started this study, what were your thoughts and convictions about your responsibility to other believers regarding their sanctification? Check all that apply.
  - I believed I should pray for the spiritual progress of others, but not get involved.
  - I believed that others' sin was their own business.
  - I believed that addressing sin was my responsibility to other believers.
  - I believed that "turning the other cheek" was the best way to deal with repeated sins against me by another believer.
  - I believed I should confront those who have sinned against me.
  - I believed that other Christians were aware of their own sin. I believed that sin deceived and blinded those who practiced it.
  - I believed that other Christians had no right pointing out my sin to me.
  - I believed that other Christians had a responsibility to help me see my sin.
  - I believed that "encouraging" other Christians meant making them feel better or helping change their circumstances.

- I believed that "encouraging" other Christians involved putting strength into them to enable them to face and even conquer their difficulties.
  - I believed that admonishment, rebuke, teaching, and correcting other Christians was for those in positions of leadership.
  - I believed that I have a responsibility for the spiritual progress of other Christians.
  - I believed that my daily social interaction with other Christians- especially my speech- was different from fellowship and growth in Christlikeness.
  - I believed that my daily social interaction with other believers- especially my speech- was an integral part of my responsibility for their growth in Christlikeness.
2. Now that you've completed this chapter, what are your thoughts and convictions regarding your responsibility and partnership with God for the sanctification of others? Check all that apply.
- I now believe I should pray for the spiritual progress of others, *and* be involved.
  - I now believe that other Christians' sin is their own business. I now believe that other Christians' sin is my responsibility to address.
  - I now believe that "turning the other cheek" is the best way to deal with repeated sins against me by another believer.
  - I now believe I should confront those who have sinned against me.
  - I now believe that other Christians are aware of their own sin.
  - I now believe that sin "deceives" those who practice it and they are blind to it.
  - I now believe that other Christians have no right to point out my sin to me.
  - I now believe that other Christians have a responsibility to me, to help me see my sin.
  - I now believe that "encouraging" other Christians means making them feel better or helping to change their circumstances.
  - I now believe that "encouraging" other Christians involves putting strength into them to enable them to face and even conquer their difficulties.
  - I now believe that admonishment, rebuke, teaching, and correcting other Christians is for those in leadership to do.
  - I now believe that I have a responsibility for the spiritual progress of other Christians.
  - I now believe that my daily social interaction with other Christians—especially my speech—is different from fellowship and growth in Christlikeness.
  - I now believe that my daily social interaction with other believers—especially my speech—is an integral part of my responsibility for their growth in Christlikeness.
3. Reflect on your relationships with other believers, including family members. Think especially of those you have a "hearing" with because of the history or depth of the connection. Have you failed to assume responsibility for anyone's growth in Christlikeness in these relationships? If so, list them and explain how you've failed them.



- a. In light of what you've discovered in this chapter, what specific can you take to assume a more responsible role in their spiritual transformation? (A reasonable first step might be to meet with them and share how God has spoken to you about this issue through this study).
4. Are there any situations in your life where other believers have sought to be agents of God's sanctifying grace in *your* life and you've refused them? If so, list them and write-out why you've rejected their attempts to help you mature in Christ.
    - a. What steps can you take to allow *others* to be agents of God's transforming work in your life? (A good first step would be to confess to the Lord your pride or desire for total individuality or privacy. Then seek the forgiveness of those you've rejected. In addition to friends, this could be a spouse, a parent, or even a child.)
  5. Reflect on your closest relationships with other believers. Are there any situations where you've had a *negative* influence on their spiritual progress? If so, describe what you've done to hinder their spiritual growth.
    - a. What steps could you take to begin positively investing in their spiritual progress?

#### **SCRIPTURE MEMORY** (optional)

---

- Protecting others from sin's deceit - Hebrews 3:12-13
- Investing in the transformation of others - Colossians 1:28-29